

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DOTE-00 FEA-01

INT-05 OES-03 /105 W

----- 103490

R 141257Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2000

INFO USINT BAGHDD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

GFDPNQ/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 220

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SOPHIA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

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BEIRUT PASS USINT BAGHDAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELTN, ETRD, EALR, TU, IR

SUBJ: CONTROVERSY OVER TURKISH ROAD TRANSIT FEE INCREASES

REF: (A) TEHRAN 0094 (NOTAL) (B) TEHRAN 0187 (NOTAL) (C) ANKARA 0170 (NOTAL) (D) DAMASCUS 0142 (NOTAL)

1. TURKISH DECREE SUBSTANTIALLY RAISING TARIFFS PAID BY TIR TRUCKS TRANSITTING TURKEY TO IRAN AND POINTS EAST AND SOUTH HAS RECENTLY BECOME TOPIC OF CONTROVERSY IN TURKEY AND OTHER COUNTRIES. DECREE WAS PUBLISHED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE DECEMBER 23 TO TAKE EFFECT JANUARY 7, 1976, BUT RECEIVED RELATIVELY LITTLE ATTENTION IN PRESS OR ELSEWHERE UNTIL LAST FEW DAYS. MOST TURKISH PRESS AND PUBLIC COMMENT HAS FOCUSED ON IRANIAN REACTION AND PURPORTED IRANIAN THREATS TO CANCEL UNILATERALLY \$1.2 BILLION FRAME AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN TURKEY AND IRAN IN OCTOBER, 1975.

2. NEW DECREE CANCELLED PREVIOUS DECREE ISSUED IN 1967. TRANSIT FEE UNDER OLD DECREE WAS 15 KURUS PER TON/KILOMETER (100 KURUS - 6.6 CENTS) BUT WAS GENERALLY WAIVED FOR TRUCKS REGISTERED IN COUNTRIES WITH WHOM TURKEY HAD TRANSIT AGREEMENT (BULK OF COUNTRIES IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE.) AGREEMENT WITH IRAN CALLED FOR 9 KURUS PER TON/KM. THIS TREATY WAS ABROGATED IN 1974 BY MUTUAL CONSENT BUT WITH STIPULATION THAT GOT AND IRAN WOULD NEGOTIATE NEW TRANSIT TREATY IN NEAR FUTURE.

3. UNDER NEW DECREE GOT HAS NOTIFIED ALL COUNTRIES WITH WHOM IT HAS AGREEMENTS THAT THEY MUST NEGOTIATE NEW TREATIES WITH TURKEY. NEW DECREE SETS HIGHLY COMPLICATED TARIFF SCHEDULE BUT RAISES TRANSIT FEE (PASSAGE FEE) FROM 15 KURUS TO 25 KURUS PER TON/KM. FOR COUNTRIES WITH WHOM TURKEY HAS TRANSIT AGREEMENT AND 40 KURUS FOR OTHERS. IN ADDITION THERE ARE FEES PER KILOMETER VARYING BETWEEN 50 - 250 KURUS DEPENDING ON AXLE WEIGHT OF INDIVIDUAL TRUCKS. DECREE ALSO FOR FIRST TIME CHARGES TRANSIT FEE FOR EMPTY TRUCKS ON RETURN TRIP. THIS FEE VARIES FROM 75 - 150 KURUS PER KILOMETER AND IS DOUBLED FOR TRUCKS FROM NON-AGREEMENT COUNTRIES. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BOTH LOADED AND EMPTY TRUCKS WILL ALSO PAY FEES BASED ON DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COST TO THEM OF SUBSIDIZED FUEL FROM TURKISH PUMPS AND REAL COST OF FUEL TO GOT. THESE FEES VARY FROM 45 - 75 KURUS PER KILOMETER DEPENDING ON TONNAGE OF TRUCK.

4. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ESTIMATES THAT 20 TON LOADED TRUCK FROM AGREEMENT COUNTRY PASSING WEST TO EAST THROUGH

TURKEY (1850 KMS.) FROM BULGARIA TO IRAN WILL PAY ABOUT \$1,300. EVEN IF TRUCK RETURNS EMPTY FROM IRAN HOWEVER RETURN TRIP WILL ALSO COST ABOUT \$200.

5. DECREE PERMITS TURKISH MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS TO UNILATERALLY RAISE OR LOWER TRANSIT FEES BY 30 PER CENT. MINISTRY HAS RECENTLY MADE 30 PERCENT REDUCTION IN FEE CHARGED TURKISH OWNED AND REGISTERED VEHICLES.

6. RECENT TURKISH PRESS REPORTS HAVE INDICATED THAT CONFUSION RESULTING FROM RAPID IMPLEMENTATION OF DECREE HAS CAUSED DELAY OF 1,400 TRUCKS AT BULGARIAN-TURKISH BORDER. PRESS HAS ALSO REPORTED THAT GENEVA-BASED INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT UNION(IRU) PROTECTING INTERESTS OF ITS MEMBERS HAS LODGED PROTEST WITH GOT. PROTEST REPORTEDLY CHARGED NEW SCHEDULE WAS PUT INTO EFFECT WITH LITTLE OR NO WARNING AND COULD PARALYZE ROAD TRANSPORT BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. FOREIGN MINISTRY CONFIRMED IRU PROTEST, BUT SAID IRU REQUEST FOR RETURN TO 15 KURUS FEE WAS PRECLUDED BY CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES.

7. MAIN COMPLAINT UNDERSTANDABLY APPEARS TO BE COMING FROM IRAN WHICH HAS DELIVERED FORMAL PROTEST TO GOT. IRANIAN PRESS HAS BEEN QUOTED IN TURKISH NEWSPAPERS TO EFFECT THAT IRAN WILL RECONSIDER \$1.2 BILLION AGREEMENT AND USE SYRIAN AND IRAQI TRANSIT FACILITIES IN PLACE OF TURKEY. TURKISH OFFICIALS AND EDITORIALS HAVE USED INGENIOUS REASONING IN REPLY TO IRANIAN "THREATS." SHAH'S ARGUMENT THAT OIL PRICE SHOULD BE AT LEVEL OF COST OF ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES HAS BEEN TURNED ON HIM. TURKISH PRESS SAYS THAT IF DECLINE IN TRANSIT BECAUSE OF RISING FEES PROVES CHEAPER ALTERNATIVES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXIST, TURKEY CAN AND WILL CUT TRANSIT FEES ACCORDINGLY. OTHERWISE IRAN SHOULD BE WILLING TO PAY FOR GOODS DELIVERED ON ROADS MAINTAINED WITH ASPHALT WHICH HAS GONE UP IN PRICE 700 PERCENT SINCE 1969 AND WITH FUEL COSTS THAT HAVE GONE UP SIX TIMES IN LAST THREE YEARS.

8. TRANSIT TRUCK TRAFFIC HAS BOOMED FROM 10,000 PER YEAR IN 1973 TO OVER 50,000 PER YEAR IN 1975 AND TURKISH ARGUMENT FOR FEE INCREASE HAS FOCUSED ON NEED FOR INCREASED REVENUE TO FINANCE ROAD IMPROVEMENTS, PARTICULARLY AS RELATIVELY HEAVIER WEIGHT OF TIR VEHICLES CONTRIBUTES TO MORE RAPID DETERIORATION OF ROADS. TURKS HAVE ALSO STATED THAT AT ONE TIME WHEN TURKISH TRUCK TRAFFIC TO EUROPE WAS APPROXIMATELY EQUAL TO EUROPEAN TRUCK TRAFFIC THRU TURKEY, NOMINAL FEES

WERE SUFFICIENT. NEW SITUATION HOWEVER IS OVERWHELMINGLY FAVORABLE TO EUROPE AND IRAN AND THEY SHOULD PAY ACCORDINGLY. OTHER MAJOR GRIEVANCE HAS BEEN RECENT IRAN-BULGARIA JOINT-VENTURE WITH 1,000 TRUCKS TO HAUL CARGO FROM EUROPE TO IRAN. TURKS HAD EARLIER WANTED TO SET UP SIMILAR JOINT-VENTURE WITH IRAN, BUT THIS FAILED. TURKS GENERALLY CLAIM THAT IRAN-BULGARIAN VENTURE IS POLITICAL DEAL OF SHA WHICH TOTALLY IGNORES TURKEY'S MUCH MORE CRITICAL GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AT LEAST IN RELATION TO TIR TRANSPORT.

9. FOREIGN MINISTRY RECOGNIZES THAT NEW DECREE MAY BE IRRITANT IN IRANIAN-TURKISH RELATIONS BUT POINTED OUT THAT GOT HAS BEEN ADVISING GOI REGULARLY OVER PAST TWO YEARS THAT PREVIOUS NOMINAL FEES WERE NOT POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN. TURKISH OFFICIALS SEEM RELATIVELY UNCONCERNED ABOUT EFFECT OF NEW DECREE ON \$1.2 BILLION IRAN-TURKEY AGREEMENT. INSTEAD THEY APPEAR TO FEEL THAT OTHER IRANIAN ALTERNATIVES (RUSSIA, PERSIAN GULF, SYRIA) ARE EVEN MORE COSTLY AND THAT TURKEY AND IRAN SHOULD BE ABLE TO ARRIVE AT AMICABLE SOLUTION THAT WILL ADEQUATELY COMPENSATE TURKEY FOR ENORMOUS COSTS AND INCONVENIENCES CAUSED BY TREMENDOUS INFLUX OF HEAVY TIR TRANSPORTS.

19. THERE IS AN ITEM IN THE NEW DECREE THAT IS POTENTIALLY EVEN MORE DISRUPTIVE OF TIR TRANSPORT TO IRAN THAN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCREASED FEE SCHEDULE. THIS STATES THAT THE INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ADMINISTERING THE DECREE MAY DECIDE "QUOTAS TO BE ALLOTTED TO COUNTRIES, WHICH HAVE OR WISH TO HAVE ROAD TRANSPORT AGREEMENTS WITH TURKEY." FOREIGN MINISTRY SAID THAT GOT HAS NO PLANS AT PRESENT TO LIMIT NUMBER OF TRUCKS CROSSING TERRITORY, BUT ADDED THIS SHOULD PROVIDE ADDED INCENTIVE FOR RAPID NEGOTIATION OF TRANSIT AGREEMENTS. MOREOVER, FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN TIR TRAFFIC IN PAST TWO YEARS HAS CONVINCED GOT THAT LAISSEZ-FAIRE ATTITUDE DOES NOT WORK, AND THAT IT MUST REGULATE AND USE TIR TRANSPORT IN THE TURKISH NATIONAL INTEREST.

11. DAMASCUS NOTE: WITH REFERENCE TO TELEGRAM D, FOREIGN MINISTRY STATED THAT DIPLOMATIC SHIPMENTS ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM NEW SCHEDULE. IN ADDITION, SINCE SYRIA DOES NOT HAVE TRANSIT AGREEMENT WITH TURKEY, TRUCKS REGISTERED IN SYRIA WOULD NEED TO PAY NON-SIGNATORY RATES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRUCKS, TRANSPORTATION TAXES, SPECIFIC DUTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ANKARA00327
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760014-1076
From: ANKARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760160/aaaacaxc.tel
Line Count: 219
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TEHRAN 94
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <20 APR 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONTROVERSY OVER TURKISH ROAD TRANSIT FEE INCREASES
TAGS: ELTN, ETRD, EALR, TU, IR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006